



EVALUATION OF ECA'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS:

FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Evaluation Report

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Commissioned by:

Evaluation Division
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
United States Department of State

Prepared by:

EurekaFacts, LLC



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To download a full copy of this report and its executive summary, visit:

<http://eca.state.gov/impact/evaluation-eca>

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1.0 Introduction

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program sends U.S. citizens abroad for year-long assignments as teaching assistants in classrooms around the world. Fulbright ETAs, who are generally graduating college seniors from around the United States, share their knowledge and experiences of the United States and U.S. society and culture while supporting English language learning through their presence as native English speakers. At the same time, ETAs grow and learn from intensive cross-cultural interaction and an international education experience.

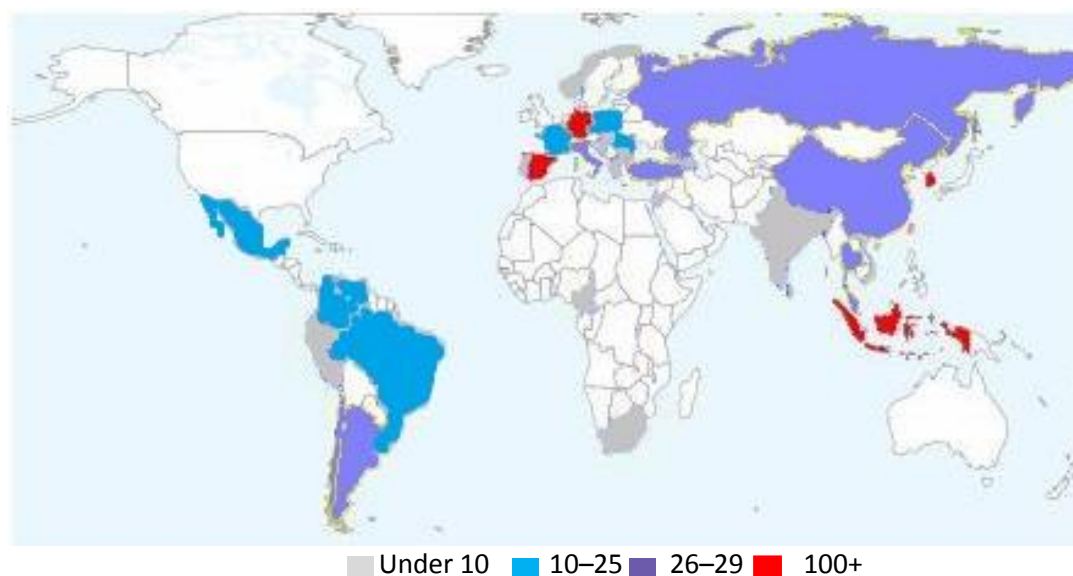
The program, which is sponsored by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), helps promote a broad array of U.S. public diplomacy and foreign policy goals, including increasing understanding and cooperation between U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries, and increasing U.S. competitiveness abroad.

ECA's Evaluation Division contracted EurekaFacts, LLC, to conduct an evaluation of the Fulbright ETA Program.

1.1 Program Reach

Between 2004–05 and 2009–10, the time period of this evaluation, 2,350 Fulbright ETAs traveled abroad to 48 countries.

Figure 1. Number of Fulbright ETAs Placed per Country, 2004–05 to 2009–10



1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness of the program in achieving ECA's broader goals, as well as the specific goals of the Fulbright ETA Program. ECA's Evaluation Division developed the following research questions to guide the evaluation:

What is the program's impact on mutual understanding?

- How did the Fulbright ETA Program foster mutual understanding and strengthen relations between the United States and its citizens, and other countries and their citizens?
- In what ways did the ETA Program facilitate or provide opportunities for shared learning, both about the host country and U.S. culture?
- How did the ETA Program facilitate reciprocal relationships among ETAs, their students, host institution teachers and instructors, and other host country nationals?

What is the impact of the program on English language teaching and learning?

- How effective was the program in enhancing English language skills among students in host institutions?
- What particular language teaching or language learning need did the teaching assistant fill in the classroom, school or educational institution?

How does the program impact ETAs' professional knowledge, expertise and development?

- What language teaching experience did the ETA gain as a result of participating in this program?
- If the ETA pursued an independent research project as part of his/her program, what did he/she gain as a result of doing the project?
- Did the ETAs face challenges? If so, how did they deal with these challenges?
- Did participation in the program inform plans for graduate study, career plans or other professional goals?
- How has participating in the program created opportunities that would not have existed otherwise?



1.3 Data Collection Strategy

The evaluation used a mixed-method data collection strategy that incorporated both a quantitative online survey and qualitative in-country interviews to evaluate the Fulbright ETA program.

Online Survey

An online survey was administered to Fulbright ETAs in the fall of 2012. The survey questionnaire covered ETAs' in-country experiences as well as post-exchange activities, including educational plans, professional development, and sustained relationships and linkages with host country citizens upon return to the United States. The survey sample was identified through the use of alumni participant lists provided by the Institute of International Education and ECA. Participant contact information was updated as necessary through direct mail, telephone and online outreach to former ETAs. The evaluation team could not locate accurate email or physical addresses for 523 of the 2,350 ETAs who participated in the program during the study period. The final sample of ETAs sent the survey consisted of 1,827 participants. A total of 792 respondents completed the survey, representing a response rate of 43 percent.

Qualitative Fieldwork

The evaluation team conducted fieldwork in four countries in 2011 and 2012: Chile, Thailand, Turkey and Russia.¹ The team conducted interviews with teachers and administrators at secondary schools, universities and other institutions where Fulbright ETAs were placed, as well as with Fulbright Commission staff, Ministry of Education officials, Regional English Language Officers, Embassy Public Affairs staff and other Embassy English language programming staff. Host country teachers and administrators who were interviewed were generally individuals who oversaw or worked with ETAs at their respective institutions.

¹ Fieldwork for the Fulbright ETA Program evaluation was combined with fieldwork for evaluations of two additional ECA English language programs. Country selection was based on a number of factors, including the presence of a critical mass of participants across all three programs, regional diversity, and the inclusion of a range of program implementation models.

1.4 Limitations of the Evaluation

Any study that attempts to capture the impacts and outcomes of a program with a diversity of educational settings and roles is subject to limitations. In assessing the results of this evaluation effort, the following limitations should be kept in mind.

- As in all studies that seek to obtain individual-level assessments of programmatic outcomes, the information provided by former Fulbright ETAs, as well as their host institution supervisors and colleagues, is perceptual and may contain respondent-level biases. The evaluation team also collected data retrospectively, asking respondents to recall events and activities that may have taken place up to 6 years prior.
- The evaluation team did not have contact information for ETAs' former students, and was thus unable to conduct interviews with them to assess program impact. As a result, the evaluation team relied on data collected from host country teachers and administrators and from ETAs themselves.
- In-country fieldwork took place in 4 of the 48 countries worldwide in which ETAs were placed during the evaluation period. As a result, qualitative data is less robust for countries that were not visited by the evaluation team.

2.0 Overview of ETA Roles and Activities

Fulbright ETAs spend an academic year living and teaching in educational institutions abroad. As they are not required to have teaching credentials or experience, an ETA's primary purpose in the classroom is as an English language teaching assistant who works to improve students' English language skills and acts as a conduit for learning about U.S. history, society and culture.

A major focus of the program is to place ETAs in areas with little direct access to U.S. citizens or other native English speakers. As reflected in the survey results, this objective is largely being met by the program. A majority (82 percent) of ETAs who responded to the online survey were placed outside their host country's capital city, with half (50 percent) reporting that they spent their year in a rural area, small town or small city. Furthermore, regardless of their geographic location within their host countries, three-quarters (73 percent) reported that their students' prior exposure to a native speaker was either very limited (56 percent) or non-existent (17 percent).

While there is some variation, ETAs generally are placed within a single host institution for a period of one academic year. Based on the current needs of the country, Posts/Fulbright Commissions are responsible for determining the types of institutions where ETAs will be placed. Host institutions generally include elementary/secondary schools and university-level language departments. Teacher training institutes, technical colleges and cultural centers also can serve as hosts. In addition, ETAs' placements in their host country educational institutions vary by country and by region. For example, more than half of the countries that host ETAs in Asia have them placed in elementary and secondary schools, while ETAs in South America generally work at universities or colleges. Overall, nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of ETAs surveyed were placed in either a secondary school (59 percent) or primary school (13 percent), and one-quarter (24 percent) were placed in university or college settings.

2.1 Teaching Duties

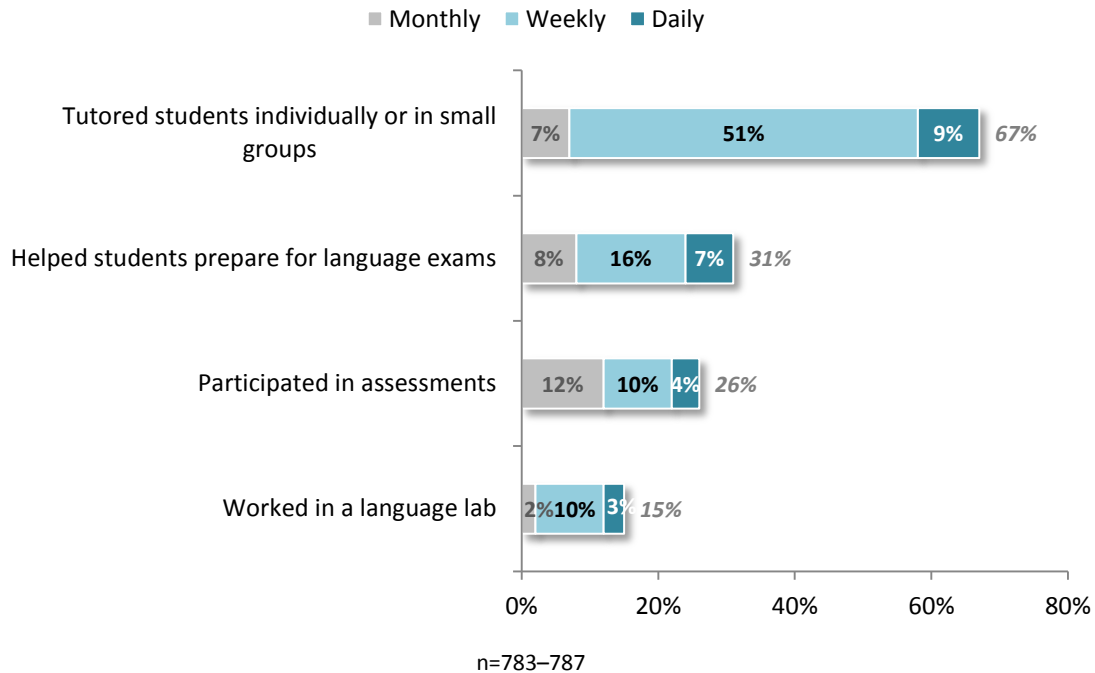
Within their host institutions, Fulbright ETAs generally are expected to serve as English language assistants under the guidance of more senior teachers. More than half (55 percent) of the survey respondents reported doing so, with 42 percent working directly under a senior teacher and 13 percent co-teaching their classes with another teacher from their host institution. However, slightly more than one-third (37 percent) taught their own classes independently.

Many ETAs noted that their teaching roles were fluid and depended on the needs of their institutions. Roles could include guest lecturing, conducting office hours and substitute teaching. As one ETA in Slovakia commented, "I had a lot going on—did some co-teaching, took over a few classes for a teacher that went on maternity leave and just had to be really flexible." In some cases, ETAs placed in universities reported that they also taught higher-level courses on topics such as U.S. culture, literature or history.

In addition to classroom teaching, ETAs spend time working with students in a variety of other ways. In particular, two-thirds (67 percent) of survey respondents reported that they had tutored students at least once a month, most of them on a weekly (51 percent) or daily (9 percent) basis. More than a quarter of ETAs also reported helping students prepare for mandatory examinations

(31 percent) and/or participating in assessments of students' language proficiency (26 percent) at least once a month.

Figure 2. Frequency of Different English-Language Activities at Host Institution



Many ETAs described responsibilities in addition to those in Figure 2 that fell outside of their regular teaching duties.

There were so many roles that we served, including college prep, counseling and mentoring, helping to edit textbooks, participation in local holidays/ceremonies, etc.

—ETA in Indonesia

I observed other teachers' classes, gave them feedback, worked on materials and ideas, served as translator for meetings and conferences.

—ETA in Brazil

I provided English storytelling for the grades I did not teach in the classroom, made English language morning announcements for holidays and spoke at the morning meetings of the entire school.

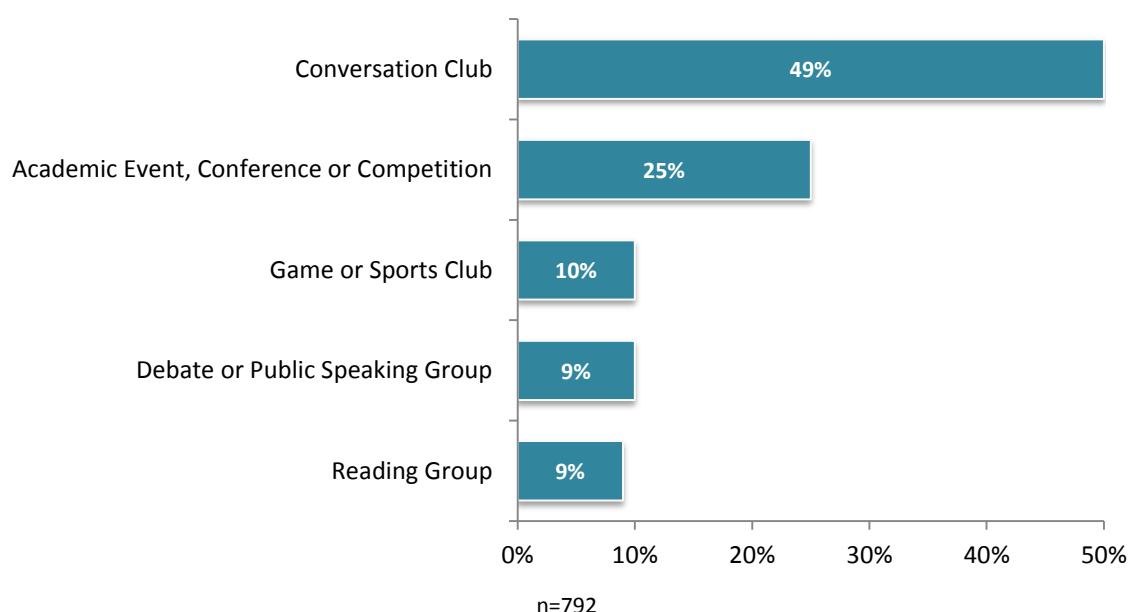
—ETA in Taiwan

Survey results showed a wide range in terms of how much time ETAs spend on their teaching duties, as well as the number of students and class sessions they teach. Most surveyed ETAs (86 percent) reported spending less than 30 hours per week teaching and preparing for their classes on average, with 44 percent reporting that they spent between 11 and 20 hours per week. As for the number of classes taught per week, roughly equal proportions of ETAs reported teaching 5 or fewer (32 percent), 6 to 10 (38 percent) or more than 10 classes (29 percent). Similarly, roughly one-third of ETAs taught fewer than 60 students (32 percent), between 60 and 100 students (33 percent) or more than 100 students (33 percent) per week.

2.2 Extracurricular Roles and Independent Projects

Three-quarters (75 percent) of Fulbright ETAs responding to the survey reported leading at least one extracurricular activity. In particular, half (49 percent) of all survey respondents started or led conversation clubs, followed by a quarter (25 percent) who organized academic events, conferences or competitions.

Figure 3. Extracurricular Activities Led or Started by ETAs at Host Institutions



ETAs who led English conversation groups used a wide variety of activities and topics to get their students talking.

I ran a biweekly English club (together with a British teacher of English) that attracted up to 100 students each time. We conducted a wide variety of activities to stimulate English conversation and cross-cultural awareness, from American/British "trivia night" to ... a debate about the usefulness of Facebook.

—ETA in Russia

In contrast with more structured, larger-scale classroom activities, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to engage with ETAs in a more direct, unfiltered way, and in smaller groups. For example, more than half of the ETAs who led or started an English language conversation club (54 percent) typically engaged with 10 or fewer students in this activity.

In addition, nearly a third (29 percent) of surveyed ETAs said they had established other types of extracurricular activities than those listed in Figure 3, usually centered on a specific theme. These activities also provided opportunities for host country English language students to exercise their conversational English and to learn more about the United States. For example, an ETA in Chile wrote, “I organized a biweekly film club where we watched a film and cooked a meal together at my apartment—sometimes U.S. typical food, sometimes Chilean food.”



Some ETAs created writing clubs, enabling students to write stories, essays, professional correspondence, or letters to students in the United States, as well as articles for school newspapers or newsletters written in English.

I started a writing exchange between my former high school with the school I was working with in Germany.
—ETA in Germany

I hosted an art/book-making club that was conducted in English. The children and I illustrated and wrote stories.
—ETA in Taiwan

We put together an English language guide to the city in which the secondary school I taught at is located.
—ETA in Spain

ETAs also introduced students to diplomatic activities. For example, many ETAs organized model UN clubs. Along the same lines, two ETAs in South Korea collaborated to develop “a diplomacy program for students from several schools that convened in Seoul, [in which] the students acted as representatives from different countries and had to come to an agreement on an international issue.”

Beyond their school duties, ETAs in many countries are expected to engage in projects or activities that relate to their personal, career or educational interests. Three-quarters (75 percent) of survey respondents engaged in these supplemental projects, most of which were either community service activities or academic/independent learning projects.

Community service projects: Of the ETAs who conducted supplemental projects, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) performed some form of volunteer community service activity to address needs in their host communities. In many cases, they used English language instruction as a vehicle to assist organizations that supported disadvantaged or marginalized populations, including abused women and girls.

I volunteered at a nonprofit organization for street children. My role was to speak with the children in English, play with the kids and create a digital data repository for the mental health and special education records.
—ETA in India

I taught special English programs for young typhoon victims. I also taught free English lessons each Friday at a nearby senior citizen center.
—ETA in Taiwan

I volunteered to lead a reading group at a local high school, gave English lessons at an orphanage, and interned at a water and sanitation NGO.
—ETA in South Africa

I volunteered at a foundation for battered women and girls where I taught English language and culture.
—ETA in Taiwan

I worked at a young girls' shelter in Chiang Mai for sexually abused young girls. [I] mentored and engaged in arts and recreational activities with the girls.
—ETA in Thailand

Academic and independent learning projects: One-quarter (24 percent) of ETAs who did a supplemental project pursued an independent learning project. Most commonly, these projects involved formal learning of a host country's language or an aspect of its history, culture, literature or political system, including issues like the environment or immigration.

I analyzed the differences between American and German perceptions of environmental sustainability by attending environmental organization meetings at both the university and city level, and also attended "Young Green" political party meetings.
—ETA in Germany

I studied immigration to and emigration from Venezuela and the attitudes of urban Venezuelans (specifically in Caracas) to immigrants in their midst and those that choose to leave.
—ETA in Venezuela

In addition, many ETAs pursued independent learning projects that focused on the arts or culture of their host countries. For example, ETAs joined musical ensembles, studied traditional forms of music or dance, and documented local culture in blogs or plays about life in their host countries.

I studied traditional Indonesian music through weekly study and performance with an ensemble in my town.
—ETA in Indonesia

I became very interested in traditional drumming and studied and practiced intensively in Korea.
—ETA in South Korea

I participated in a writing club in Spanish, meeting other writers and translating some of their works. Then, I also started a writing club in English, making some of the student work into a blog.
—ETA in Uruguay

I co-wrote and directed a bilingual musical with the help of various community artists and teachers at my school. Using all the students from kindergarten and first grade, I trained them in

acting, dance and singing in order to present a musical about racial harmony and diversity to the local community.
—ETA in Spain

Aside from their structured activities, ETAs also spent time with people in their local communities and often traveled to other parts of their host countries. Specifically, more than three-quarters (77 percent) of ETAs reported spending time outside of school with friends they had made in their community on at least a weekly basis, and half of surveyed ETAs (51 percent) reported spending free time with fellow teachers or staff from their host institutions on a daily or weekly basis. In addition, many ETAs took advantage of the opportunity to travel as a way to deepen their understanding of their host country.

I traveled around Taiwan to understand how they lived.
—ETA in Taiwan

I traveled to visit my students' families all over the province to share and learn about each other.
—ETA in Argentina

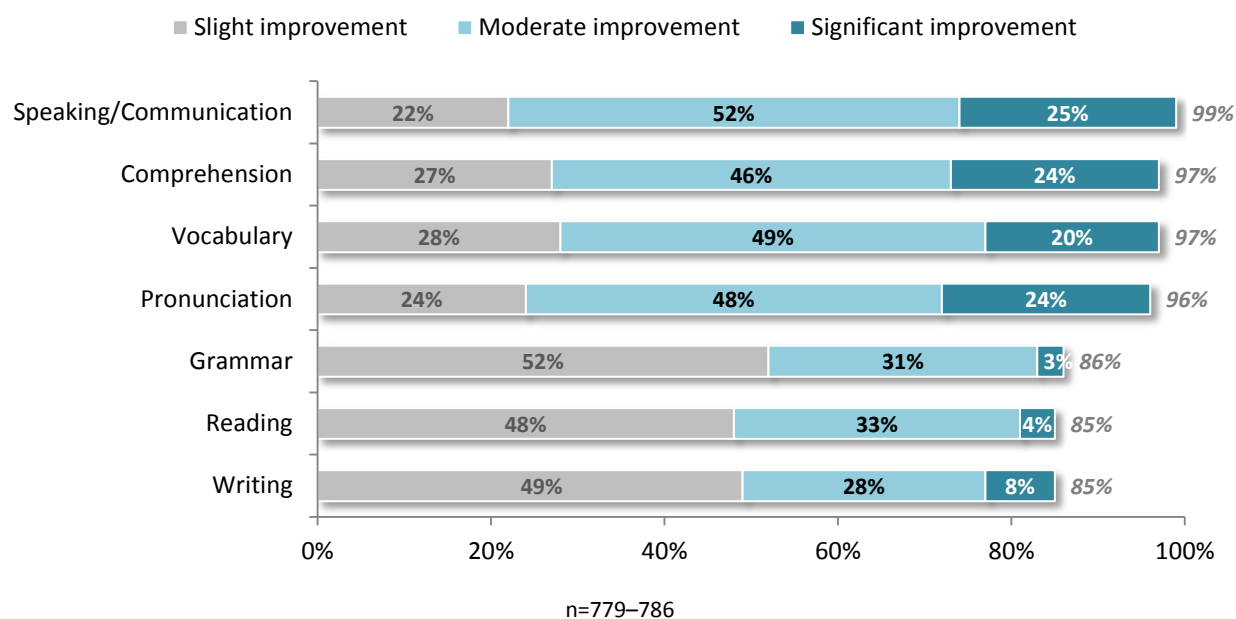
3.0 Supporting English Language Instruction

Fulbright ETAs serve primarily to improve their students' English language skills, both inside and outside of the classroom. As recent college graduates from a wide range of academic fields, ETAs are not trained English teachers, but in their roles as teaching assistants, they support students in language learning.

3.1 Improved English and Active Learning Skills

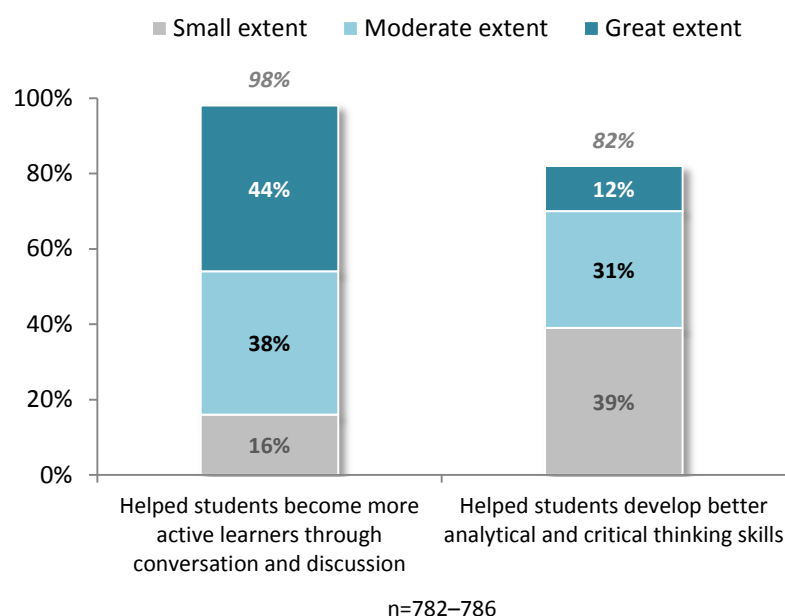
Most Fulbright ETAs reported that their students' English skills had improved in all areas as a result of their teaching activities. In particular, nearly all ETAs responding to the survey indicated that their students had improved their skills in speaking, comprehension, vocabulary and pronunciation, the majority to a "moderate" or "significant" extent. Likewise, as shown in Figure 4, most ETAs (approximately 85 percent) reported improvements in students' grammar, reading and writing skills; more than one-third of them saw moderate or significant improvement in these areas.

Figure 4. Students' English Language Knowledge and Skill Gains: ETA Perceptions



In addition, nearly all surveyed ETAs (98 percent) reported assisting their students to become more active learners through conversation and discussion, most of them to a great (44 percent) or moderate extent (38 percent). Similarly, most ETAs (82 percent) helped students to improve their analytical and critical thinking skills, 43 percent to a “great” or “moderate” extent. These skills can serve students across subjects and throughout their education.

Figure 5. Students' Change in Active Learning and Critical Thinking: ETA Perceptions



3.2 Increasing English Proficiency and Confidence through Conversation

As noted in Chapter 1, Fulbright ETAs were often the only native speaker at their host institutions. As such, their duties typically involved supporting students' conversation skills. ETAs' host country colleagues emphasized that ETAs make a substantial impact on their students' ability to communicate in English.

Host country colleagues observed that in cases where ETAs lacked fluency in their host country's language, their presence in the classroom ensured that their students communicated in English rather than their local language.

Of course, when students see people speaking in a different language, they stop speaking Turkish. If the teacher is Turkish, they have this tendency to express themselves [in Turkish], because it's easier, of course, but when they start talking to [Americans], they just start speaking in English. ... They are forced to express themselves in English.

—University Administrator in Turkey

Thai teachers rarely speak English with the students in classroom because they say, “Teacher, I don’t understand, speak Thai.” ... But when they study with [an] ETA teacher, they must try to listen, because the teachers don’t speak Thai with them. So they try to listen and try to speak with the teacher. They can learn how to communicate in English.

—School Administrator in Thailand

ETAs' supervisors and colleagues also explained that hearing English speech directly from a native speaker contributes to students' proficiency and ability to communicate, especially given that host country teachers' accents and pronunciation of English tend to differ from those of U.S. citizens.

When a student is more exposed to the actual foreign sounds, they are more competent, more aware, and they can understand better. Exposure is the key. Our students are not exposed to the real language. So they are exposed to our [own form of] English. It's Turkish English in terms of the sounds.

—University Administrator in Turkey

I would say that [exposure to native speakers] was a very important benefit, because they could interact with them daily, and the interaction, of course, was in English, and since many of these [university-level students] are going to be teachers of English in the future, they could improve their language command. I think that that was a very positive effect.

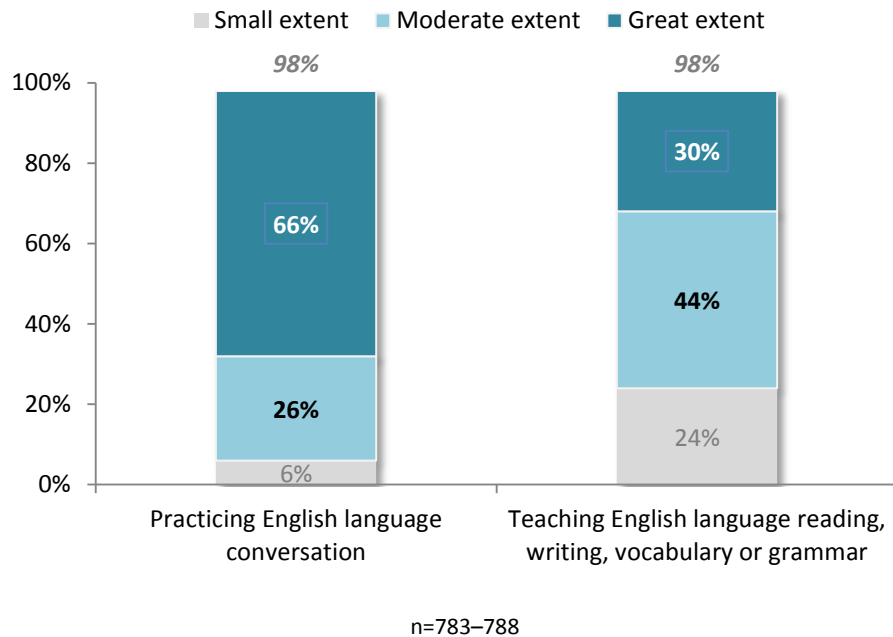
—University Administrator in Chile

It's very good for our school [to have] the native speaker, because ... the students—but the teacher also—have a chance to speak and communicate in English with American people, too. Because in our area there are few foreigners [that] come to visit, so we have just few chances to speak it and to meet to talk with foreigners. That is good for our school, teachers, our students and our community.

—School Administrator in Thailand



In addition, ETAs provide extensive opportunities for conversation in their classes. For example, as shown in Figure 6, while nearly all surveyed ETAs taught English through both conversation and reading/writing skills, two-thirds (66 percent) of them focused to a great extent on practicing English language conversation.

Figure 6. Focus of ETAs' Teaching

Furthermore, nearly all surveyed ETAs (97 percent) emphasized interactive activities, such as conversations or debates, in the classroom, with the majority (55 percent) doing so to a great extent. Many of their host country colleagues noted that ETAs' incorporation of discussions and other highly interactive activities—such as games, role-playing, singing and listening to songs, and watching and discussing videos—facilitated a learning environment in which students were encouraged to practice speaking English.

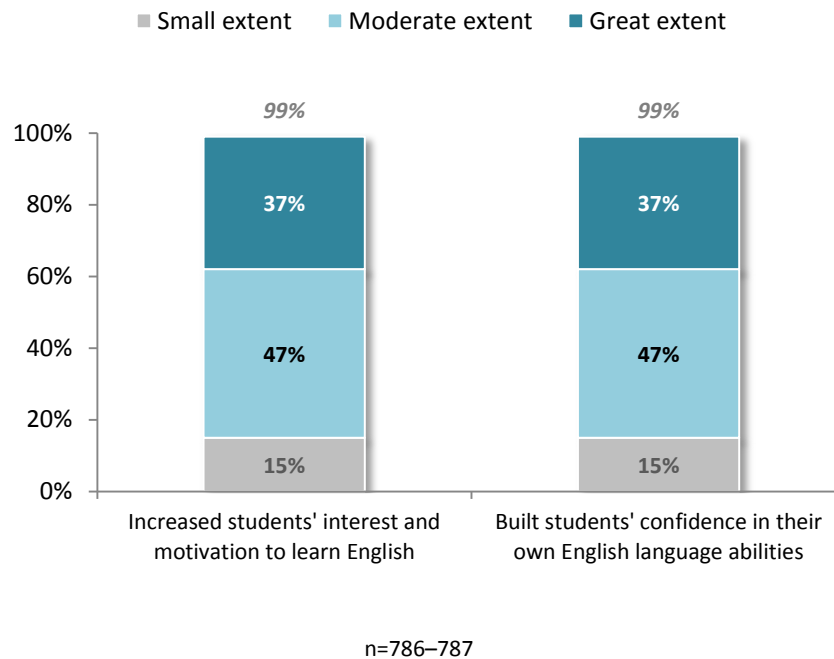
The methodology that American ETAs bring was very different, and not within our traditional mentoring systems. They use much more interactive role play and exercises.

—University Administrator in Russia

In a way, their classes are not typical classes. So, films, extra materials, discussion topics, etc., most of all two skills: listening comprehension and speaking. They encourage these students to speak, to express themselves.

—University Administrator in Turkey

Indeed, nearly all surveyed ETAs believed that they had increased their students' interest and motivation to learn English, as well as helped to build their confidence in their English language abilities. As shown in Figure 7, a strong majority (84 percent) of ETAs believed they had done so to a great or moderate extent, for both categories.

Figure 7. Students' Interest and Confidence in English Language Learning: ETA Perceptions

Host country colleagues explained that students had gained confidence in their speaking skills due to the comfortable environment fostered by ETAs, in which students were able to overcome their hesitance to speak, and then express their ideas in English and make themselves understood.

When students interacted with the ETAs, they didn't feel uncomfortable, or they didn't feel they were going to be punished for making mistakes. They felt very relaxed, and that's what we really wanted because we wanted our students to practice the language, to improve their language, and the way to do so is that they could feel comfortable, and they could feel in an environment in which they could say whatever they wanted to. In that sense, ETAs did a very good job because they really helped the students to feel comfortable and to express themselves and to help them improve their proficiency.

—University Administrator in Chile

I guess, at least from my experience, first- and second-year [university] students, sometimes they're afraid of speaking with native speakers. So for them, it was very important to overcome this language barrier. And they were very happy when they realized that they really can speak to native speakers, and not even speak, but understand and interact and communicate.

—University Administrator in Russia

A common finding across all interviews with ETAs' former colleagues was the high value that host country institutions placed on ETAs as an educational resource, one that strengthened their students' confidence and English proficiency. Furthermore, when looking back on their own experiences, more than 90 percent of ETAs saw their presence as “very valuable” (52 percent), or “somewhat valuable” (40 percent) to their host institutions.

4.0 Fostering Learning and Changing Perceptions about the United States

During their year abroad, Fulbright ETAs introduce U.S. society and culture to their host country students. Both ETAs and their former colleagues and supervisors view this as a core component of their activities abroad.

ETAs are like ambassadors here who represent their country and who tell the truth about their country, about their everyday life, about their family life. It's very important. And our [students] understand that these people, American people, they are the same as me. They feel the same.

—University Administrator in Russia

4.1 Fostering Learning about the United States

Many Fulbright ETA colleagues reported that ETAs were often the first U.S. citizens that their students had met. While most students had previous opportunities to learn about the United States through their formal schooling or through the mass media or popular culture, far fewer had ever interacted with U.S. citizens, and even fewer had visited the United States.

[The ETAs] were probably the very first Americans they ever met in their lives in person. So, it had an impact, in my opinion. [Students learn that] Americans are like this, Americans say this way, they love this, they don't hate this, etc. So, they learn [about] America a lot, and they change in that sense. Their perceptions change. ... They cannot go to America, but America comes to their feet.

—University Administrator in Turkey

Host country colleagues also emphasized that this face-to-face interaction enables ETAs to engage their students in in-depth learning about the United States and its culture that goes far beyond the descriptions found in English language lesson plans or textbooks.

For [our students], it was very interesting to learn firsthand ... from a real person, not from books, from TV or from other sources of information. And I think it was [a] great contribution of the ETAs.

—University Professor in Russia

In our [English language] course books, there are lots of cultural components. [But it is] different to have someone real from that culture—[a] cultural aspect, cultural awareness could be given to the students.

—University Administrator in Turkey

Nearly all surveyed ETAs (97 percent) reported bringing their own experiences, cultures and traditions into the learning process to a great (75 percent) or moderate extent (22 percent). Both ETAs and their host institution colleagues noted the importance of sharing such experiences as a way to teach students about U.S. culture.

I felt that through me, they gained a glimpse of the United States and what it represents. I tried to impress upon them the diversity and depth of American culture. That diversity—in every sense of the word (climate, beliefs, education, rural v. urban, etc.)—meant that I did not try to convey to them many bite-sized, broad-stroke impressions of the United States, but rather focused on my own life and experiences as a way to teach and spark curiosity.

—ETA in Malaysia

[The ETA] started with describing her family. She's from Minnesota, and students usually don't really know and [have] never heard of this state. ... She started from this specific little thing, and then she opened for them the broad spectrum of the United States, different cultures, languages,

accents. So that was very interesting—usually we start from the political system, the president. ...
 —University Administrator in Russia

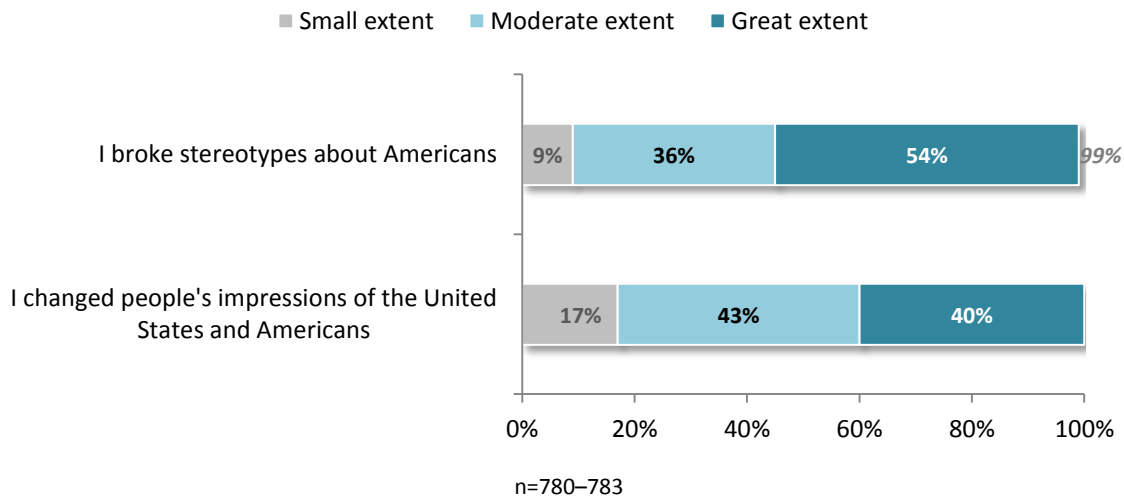
Many ETAs and their former colleagues also noted that the ETAs' closeness to their students' age made students feel comfortable approaching them about U.S. topics and personal opinions.

[Our students] can ask [ETAs] questions. First of all, all the [ETAs] are very young. They're almost the same age as the students, so there are no restrictions for any questions. And they ask them questions which they never would have asked us, [such as about] gender and racism.
 —University Administrator in Russia

4.2 Changing Perceptions

Fulbright ETAs challenge their students' preconceptions about the United States. As shown in Figure 8, the vast majority of surveyed ETAs (90 percent) believed that they had helped break stereotypes about U.S. citizens to a great (54 percent) or moderate extent (36 percent). In addition, most ETAs (83 percent) believed that they had changed people's impressions of the United States and its citizens to either a great (40 percent) or moderate extent (43 percent).

Figure 8. ETAs' Effect on Host Country Perceptions of the United States



ETAs explained some of the ways in which they had challenged stereotypes and assumptions about the U.S. government and U.S. citizens.

[I] not only [broke] racial stereotypes, but other stereotypes that they get mostly from media, and ... the kids were so curious, and asked so many questions about all aspects of American life.
 —ETA in Thailand

We talked a lot about the American military, trying to explain that most individual soldiers were not out to commit atrocities in the Muslim world or abuse innocent civilians; they only see the actions of the few ... in newspapers and television.
 —ETA in Turkey

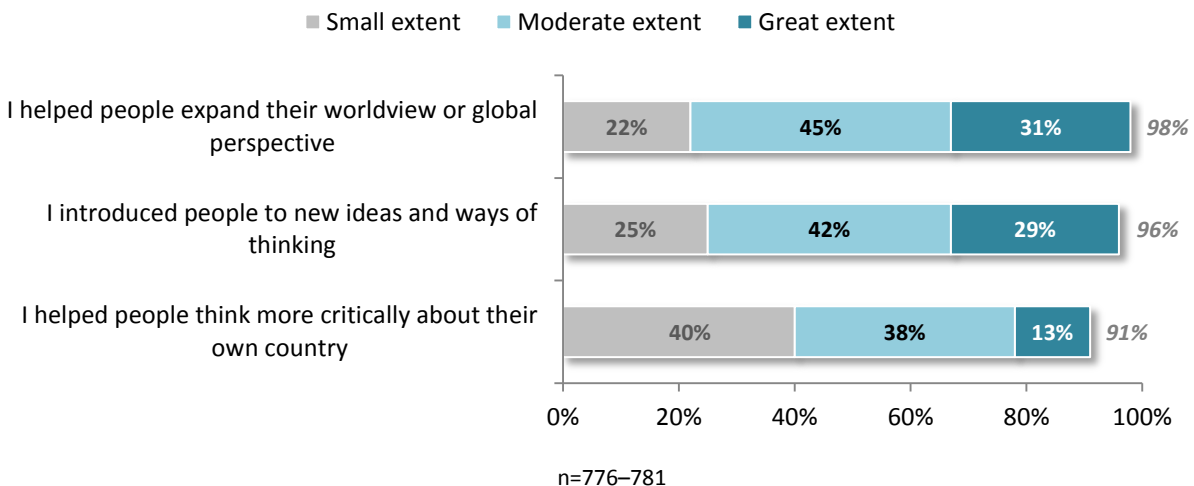
Some host country colleagues explained that ETAs had broken stereotypes about U.S. citizens just by their presence.

[The ETA] was quite different from the American stereotype we normally have in Russia, because when you are dealing with people like him, you will change your opinion. That's what happened with most of us, I think. ...
 —University Professor in Russia

It's not only improving speaking, but also opening their minds, because sometimes even students of International Relations, they come here thinking that Americans are not good at geography, or they're not so interested in other countries. And then they have classes with ETAs. They understand that it's not true. And I think that it was also great for them just to experience that difference. ... That's one of the major points of having an ETA teacher—that Americans are humans.
 —University Administrator in Russia

ETAs reported that they not only had changed the way their students and colleagues viewed the United States, but also had introduced a more global lens for viewing the world. More specifically, three-quarters (76 percent) of ETAs believed that they had helped people in their host countries to expand their worldview to either a great (31 percent) or moderate extent (45 percent). As shown in Figure 9, majorities of ETAs also indicated that they had exposed others to new ways of thinking (71 percent) and had helped them to think more critically about their own countries (51 percent) to a great or moderate extent.

Figure 9. Broadening People's Worldviews



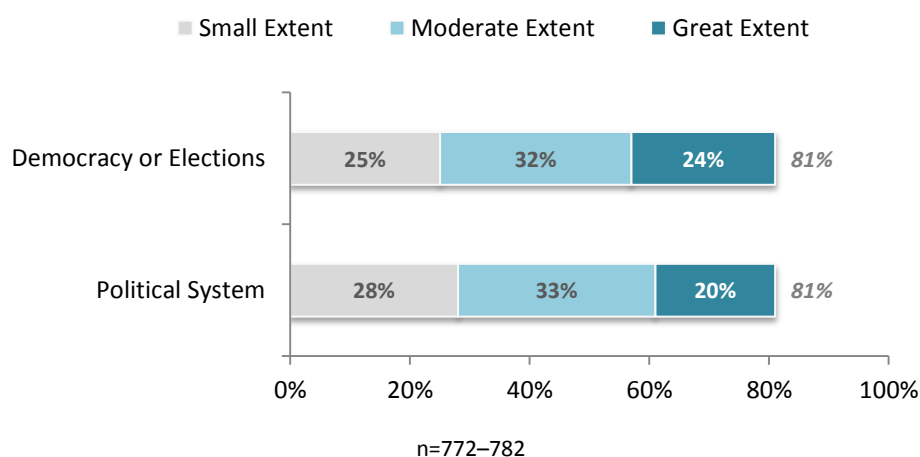
5.0 Increasing Knowledge of U.S. Society, Politics and the Arts

Fulbright ETAs increased their students' knowledge of U.S. society, politics and the arts by incorporating these subjects into their teaching and extracurricular activities.

5.1 Politics

Most Fulbright ETAs responding to the online survey (81 percent) reported that their students had gained greater knowledge and understanding of both U.S. democracy and the political system.

Figure 10. Increases in Students' Knowledge of U.S. Democracy and Political System: ETA Perceptions



ETAs helped students understand U.S. politics by discussing current events, such as recent presidential elections. As one ETA in Germany explained, “I was very lucky in that this was the year that Obama was elected as president. So it really inspired a great interest to many of the students, who were almost all people of color. ...” Another ETA noted that discussing U.S. foreign policy with students had led some to view the United States differently:

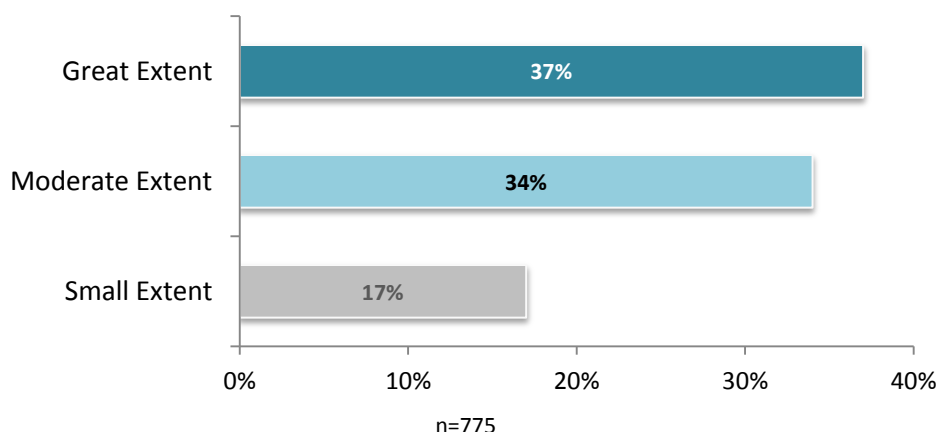
Many of my students had questions about ... the role the United States played in the dictatorship in Chile. I addressed these issues openly and honestly with them to the best of my knowledge, and many of them told me that their image of people from the US changed favorably after talking with me.

—ETA in Chile

5.2 Diversity

The vast majority (88 percent) of Fulbright ETAs reported that their students had gained a better understanding of civil rights or racial diversity in the United States, 37 percent of them to a great extent.

Figure 11. Increases in Students' Knowledge of Civil Rights and Racial Diversity in US: ETA Perceptions



Indeed, many ETAs taught their students about diversity in the United States by discussing the variety of races, religions and ethnicities that make up the social fabric. They also confronted the issue of racism.

[I discussed] America's historical past with racism and appreciating diversity.

—ETA in Thailand

We shared a lot about cultural misconceptions and stereotypes regarding each other's country. We talked about racism and the diversity of people and cultures we had in the USA. We also discussed who is American and what that may or may not look like.

—ETA in Indonesia

I taught them about the life of an American who is not your typical "white American" that they see on TV. I taught them about diversity and how the US is a melting pot made up of people from all different cultures and backgrounds and how we all worked and lived together in one nation.

—ETA in South Korea

*I was able to work with texts such as *A Raisin in the Sun* and introduce students to many aspects of African-American culture/literature, which everyone really enjoyed, including myself.*

—ETA in Germany

Furthermore, some ETAs specifically noted that their own ethnic or racial identity had contributed to their students' understanding of U.S. society.

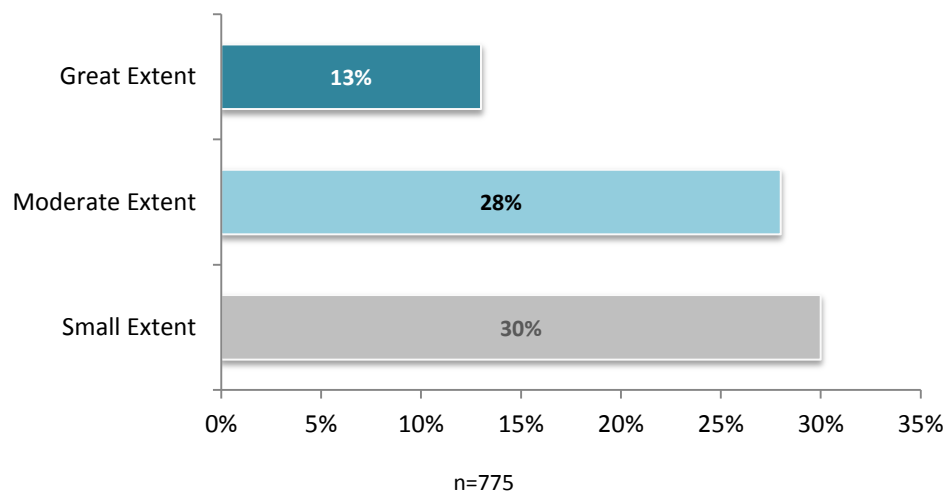
A big part of my experience, too, was being the Indian-American and, you know, convincing them that not all people in America look like they do on High School Musical. I mean, there's a huge diversity. And it was good for me to teach them that, and good for me to understand my own identity as an Indian-American, and what that means to me.
—ETA in Malaysia

I was the first African-American that my students had ever met. So definitely I was breaking down certain misconceptions regarding what an American looks like ... is like.
—ETA in Thailand

5.3 Gender

As shown in Figure 12, most Fulbright ETAs (71 percent) also reported that their students had gained a better understanding of the role of gender in the United States.

Figure 12. Increases in Students' Knowledge of Gender and Women's Issues/Roles in US: ETA Perceptions



Several ETAs reported addressing the roles of women and girls with their students. For example, one ETA taught lessons on gender, perceptions of beauty and body image:

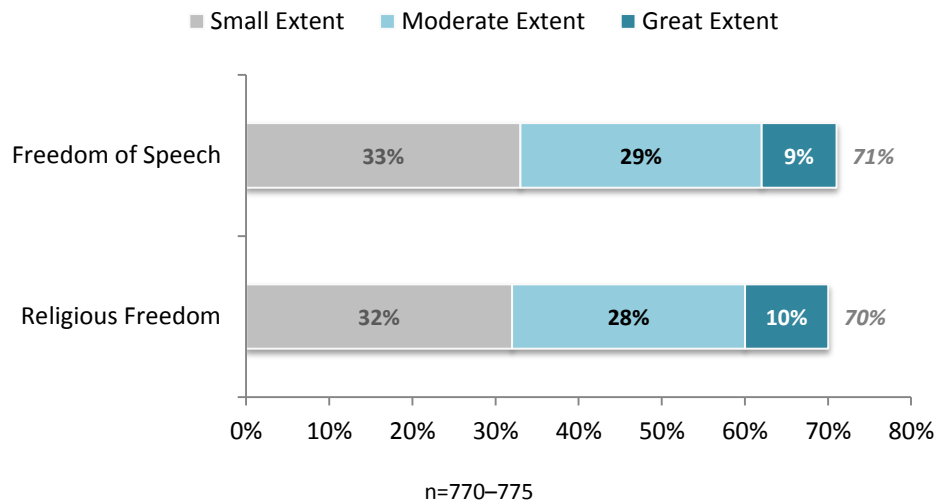
I gave lessons to my all-girls' school regarding beauty and the differences in perceptions of what's beautiful around the world. I hope that it helped them understand that beauty is entirely subjective and can be completely different in two different cultures. This was important in South Korea, where they are all trying to look more "Western."
—ETA in South Korea

Such lessons provided mechanisms through which perceptions of and attitudes towards gender in both countries could be explored.

5.4 Rights and Freedoms

Fulbright ETAs engaged their students in discussions of civil liberties in the United States. As shown in Figure 13, more than two-thirds of ETAs reported that their students had gained knowledge of two key subjects: freedom of speech and religious freedom in the United States.

Figure 13. Increases in Students' Knowledge of Freedom of Speech and Religion in US: ETA Perceptions



Some ETAs discussed religious freedoms in the United States in comparison with other countries, including their host countries.

I remember having many conversations about religious freedom in the United States, because at the time, France and Germany were both debating publicly whether it was appropriate for Muslim women to wear the hijab in schools and at work.

—ETA in Germany

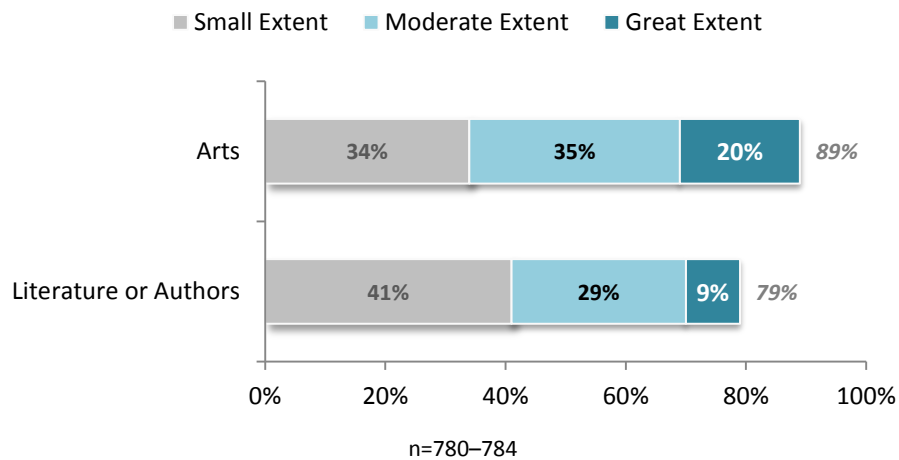
Teaching in an Islamic boarding school, religion was a big topic for the teachers and students, so there was a lot of discussion around religion, including the role of religion in the personal and social spheres, and the relationship between religion and government in the USA.

—ETA in unspecified country

5.5 Arts and Culture

Fulbright ETAs incorporated U.S. arts and culture into their teaching as a lens through which to view U.S. society. As shown in Figure 14, large majorities of ETAs believed that their students had increased their knowledge and understanding of both U.S. arts (89 percent) and literature (79 percent).

Figure 14. Increases in Students' Knowledge/Understanding of U.S. Arts and Literature



ETAs designed classes and organized extracurricular programs to immerse students in U.S. arts and culture. For example, two ETAs in South America taught courses exploring U.S. culture through film and music:

I taught a class called "America: Explorations in Language and Culture." As part of my class, I [brought] new media to the classroom [and used] videos, songs and popular culture to get students interested in English and interested in learning. We made some videos as a class, and we talked about the influence of media and what media does in Brazil and what [that] has to do with English.

—ETA in Brazil

I created an elective course my second semester called "American Culture through Film."

—ETA in Chile

Furthermore, arts-oriented extracurricular programs allowed students to learn about U.S. culture experientially. For example, an ETA in Russia created a student-run theater and led an English language production of *Twelve Angry Men*, which, according to a university administrator, resonated with the students who staged and performed it. As another example, an ETA in Argentina organized a hip-hop dance workshop for students as part of a July 4th celebration at the host university.

Through the arts, ETAs were able to convey a more complex view of the United States. For example, as noted earlier, an ETA in Germany used literary texts such as *A Raisin in the Sun* to teach students about African-American culture. Likewise, a former ETA colleague in Turkey noted that by showing and discussing films with students, ETAs had deepened students' understanding of U.S. culture and society:

[ETAs] brought in films they liked in America, and they explained the film, and they explained American culture and ways through those films. And, without their help, our students cannot get that point. You can watch it and may not understand. You don't know the custom behind it, for example, so they helped in that sense. ... They were Americans, so they represent America in that sense.

—University Administrator in Turkey

As will be discussed in Chapter 6, not only did ETAs teach their students about U.S. culture, they also gained in-depth knowledge of their host country's culture.



6.0 ETAs' Own Country-Specific and Cross-Cultural Learning

As a result of their year-long cultural immersion, Fulbright ETAs developed host country expertise and cross-cultural awareness. In fact, nearly all ETAs surveyed (99 percent) reported that they had increased their knowledge of their host country cultures and societies—89 percent of them to a “great extent.” Many ETAs noted that they had gained an insider’s perspective into the local community and language that they could not have gotten in a U.S. university classroom.

Although I had studied Russian for years and lived in the country before, being a part of a Russian institution afforded me the opportunity to see the inner workings of the society in a way I hadn't before. The year I spent in Russia also increased my language skills immensely, despite over 4 years of prior formal training.

–ETA in Russia

6.1 Taking on a Global Perspective

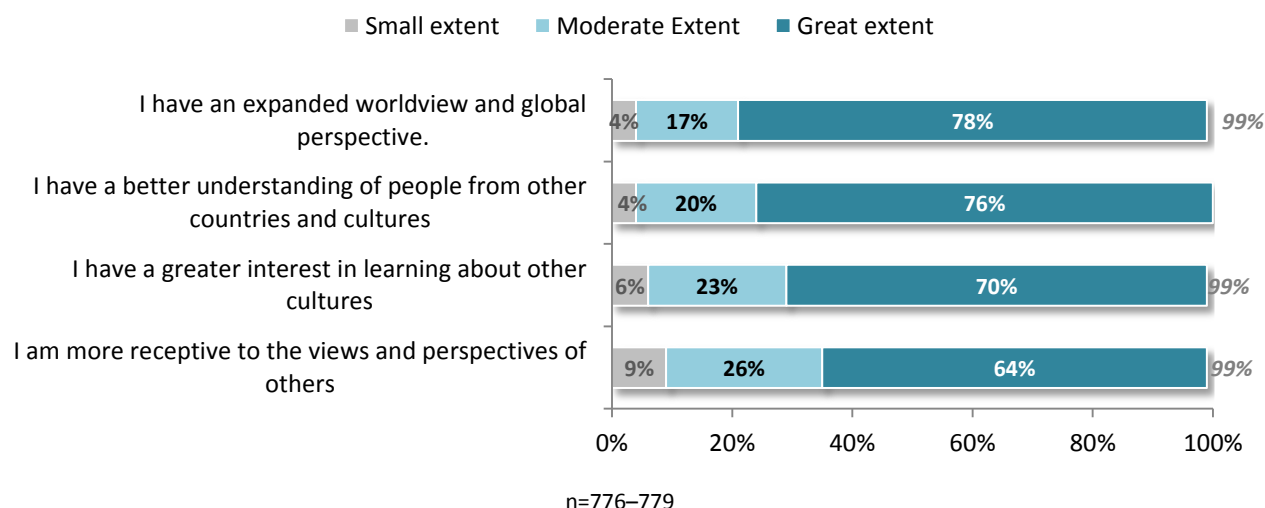
Fulbright ETAs’ experience abroad increased their intercultural competence in general, beyond specific knowledge of their host countries.

Living abroad made the rest of the world—the world beyond these borders—real. I can better understand the reality of things happening abroad, and not just in Portugal, not even just in Western Europe, but in the Middle East and elsewhere.

–ETA in Portugal

More than three-quarters (78 percent) of ETAs credited the program with expanding their “worldview and global perspective” to a great extent. Additionally, as shown in Figure 15, more than 60 percent of ETAs reported a great degree of change in their understanding of people from other countries and cultures, their interest in learning about other cultures, and their receptivity towards views and perspectives that may be different from their own.

Figure 15. ETAs’ Increased Intercultural Knowledge and Expanded Perspective



Many ETAs reported that their experience had resulted in significant personal development. For example, several noted that the cultural competencies gained during their assignments abroad are still highly useful for day-to-day interactions and engagement with people from other cultures and perspectives.

It has been a great pleasure to be able to greet people cross-culturally, and to be able to apply standards of etiquette appropriately. ... I am able to interact and work well with people from multiple cultural backgrounds. Various facets of these experiences inform how I live my daily life, and I frequently tap into the cross-cultural insights I have acquired by making reference points and telling stories when I communicate with people.

—ETA in Russia

I operate differently now, and I seek to create community. ...There are social issues that require engagement with different communities and the ability to seamlessly navigate between different groups. I believe in my ability to do this now, my ability to create community where one is lacking because of my time abroad as a Fulbrighter.

—ETA in Spain

For some ETAs, this was an experience that not only made them more understanding of other cultures but also made them more reflective about their identity as U.S. citizens. ETAs learned about the United States and themselves by seeing through the perspectives of people from a different country.

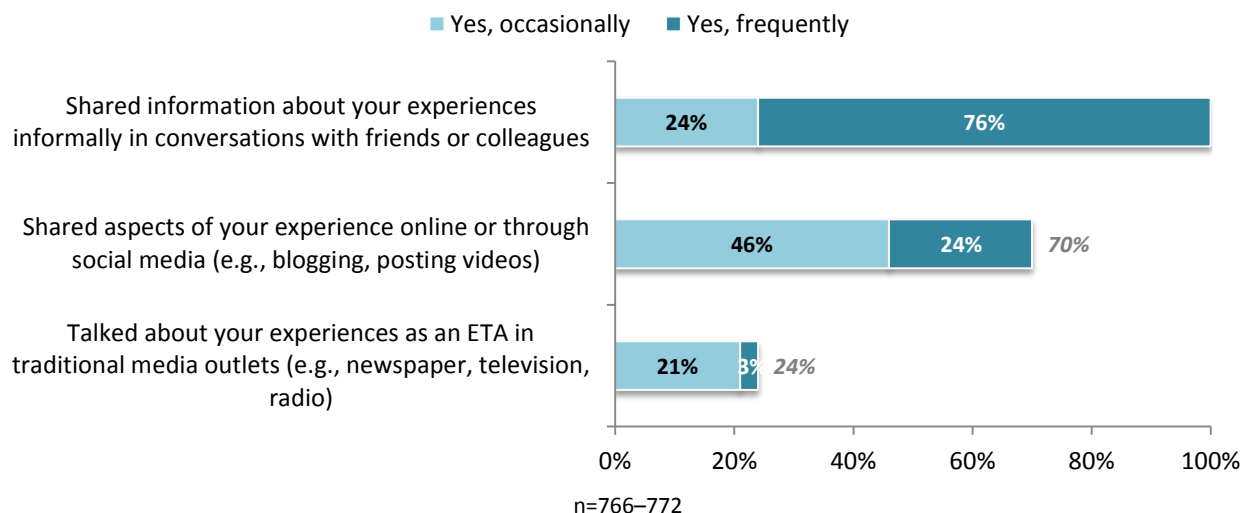
No one can complete this program without having grown more aware and open-minded from it. Not only my students, but I also learned a great deal about the USA just by learning about the perspectives of people from a different country.

—ETA in Germany

6.2 Sharing Experiences

The majority of Fulbright ETAs reported sharing their in-country experiences and newly acquired perspectives on their host country with fellow U.S. citizens both during their year abroad and upon their return. They most often shared experiences through informal conversations with friends or colleagues, which three-quarters (76 percent) of ETAs reported having done frequently. Seven in ten ETAs reported that they also had shared aspects of their experience online or through social media, either frequently (24 percent) or occasionally (46 percent). A quarter (24 percent) also talked about their ETA experiences in traditional media outlets at least occasionally.

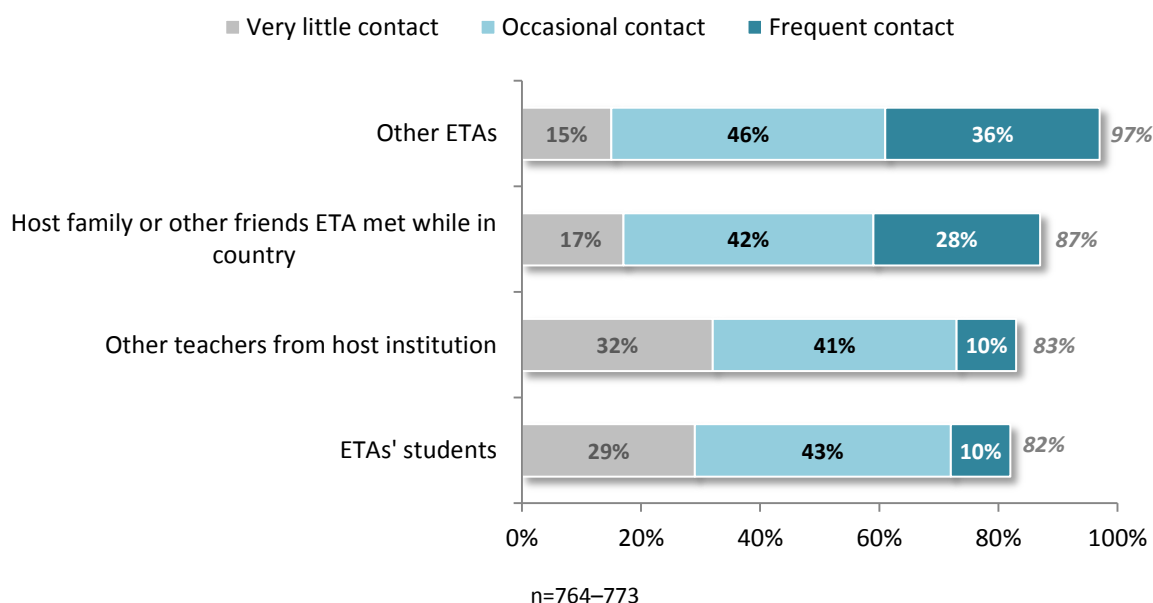
Figure 16. ETAs' Methods of Sharing Experience



7.0 Maintaining Host Country Ties

Fulbright ETAs often maintain contact with host institutions and communities after they leave the program. As shown in Figure 17, the majority of surveyed ETAs reported staying in frequent or occasional contact with other ETAs (82 percent), host families or other host country friends (70 percent), former students (53 percent) and teachers from their host institutions (51 percent).

Figure 17. Sustained Relationships Following the Program



In fact, nearly all surveyed ETAs (97 percent) reported maintaining long-term linkages with friends in their former host country, and many returned to visit after their assignments ended.

I expected to be immersed in the culture, but I never expected to form the bonds with my students and colleagues that I did. I have lifelong friends that, due to social media, I can still stay in touch with.

—ETA in Turkey

I feel like I gained so much and shared so much. I taught second-graders who had only had 1 prior year of English. When I returned to visit 3 years later, they were speaking to me in full, complex English sentences. ...

—ETA in Spain

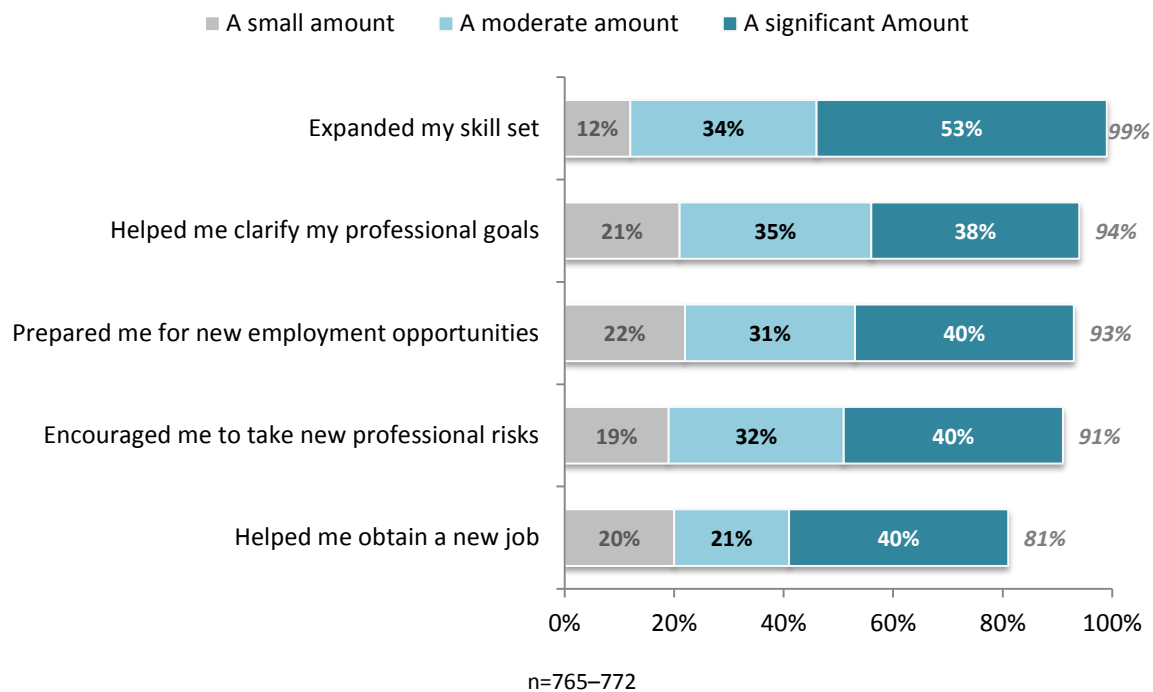
8.0 Professional and Academic Development

Fulbright ETAs credit the program with improving job-related skills and providing focus and direction with respect to future academic and career pursuits.

8.1 Professional Development

As shown in Figure 18, the vast majority of Fulbright ETAs responding to the survey (87 percent) noted that the program had expanded their skill set either significantly (53 percent) or moderately (34 percent). Similarly, close to three-quarters indicated that the program, to a significant or moderate extent, had helped them to clarify their professional goals (73 percent), encouraged them to take new professional risks (72 percent) and prepared them for new employment opportunities (71 percent). Furthermore, the program helped 6 in 10 ETAs (61 percent) to obtain a new job.

Figure 18. ETA Assessments of Professional Impacts of Program Participation



While the ETA Program is not formally intended as a teacher training program, 42 percent of survey respondents reported that they had continued to study or to work in education or teaching after returning home. ETAs discussed how their experience teaching abroad had motivated them to become educators:

I wasn't sure I wanted to be a teacher before being an ETA. I was actually pretty sure I didn't want to be one. But after a few months in the program, I decided that I had to be a teacher. Since then I've pursued teaching as a career and am also working on a Master's with a focus on studying racial and minority issues in my host country.

—ETA in Germany

My Fulbright experience ... is the reason why I worked at the German International School of Boston for 3 and a half years. It is also the reason why I am applying to graduate school this fall for speech and language pathology, because the gift of communication in any form is priceless. The ETA Program has enriched my life for the better.
—ETA in Germany

My experience as an ETA really did clarify my professional goals and inspire me to change my career path to education. It helped me to gain admission to a competitive graduate program and to find a teaching job immediately after.
—ETA in Spain

The Fulbright was a major reason as to why I am now getting my Master's in Applied Linguistics and pursuing English language education as a profession.
—ETA in Indonesia

Furthermore, almost one-third (29 percent) of all surveyed ETAs specifically have continued in the field of English language teaching (e.g., teaching English as a foreign language):

The ETA program significantly impacted my life, both professionally and personally. Currently, I am an ESL/English teacher at an international school in my host country and city. The ETA experience helped me decide on a career path, and I couldn't be happier.
—ETA in Italy

My experiences as an ETA led me to the field of TESOL [Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages], in which I am currently teaching. The exchange of cultures and ideas that I experienced while a TA is something that I now get to continue doing on a daily basis as I work with my ESL students from many different countries, and which is one of the most rewarding parts of my job.
—ETA in Germany

Other ETAs noted that the program had influenced them to pursue careers in international education, development or diplomacy:

Living in a rural Islamic environment in Malaysia for a year gave me insights I wouldn't have had otherwise. I've continued working with people of other cultures, and I currently work in International Development. I think my ETA experience led me to this field.
—ETA in Malaysia

I went on to complete an MA in International Studies and am now working on educational programs at an international development organization.
—ETA in Russia

After both living and teaching in Spain, it is my goal to have a career that fosters public diplomacy. I believe in the use of soft power politics as a means of diplomatic outreach and education. My experience taught me the necessity of communications with international audiences through exchanges as a means of foreign policy development and to confront anti-American sentiment that is all too prevalent in recent months.
—ETA in Spain

8.2 Academic Development

Many Fulbright ETAs explained that they had relied on the experience—as well as the language and teaching skills—gained in the program as they worked toward advanced degrees.

The program was instrumental in encouraging me to continue with my own education. I am currently studying abroad again in Germany while pursuing my PhD in German Literature. I hope to spend my career teaching at the university level.
—ETA in Germany

I attended [graduate-level] classes [while an ETA] ... and utilized the classroom experience to do observational research that became the basis of my application for a PhD program in global communication.

—ETA in Germany

My year as an ETA was without a doubt the most enriching and rewarding of my life. I can truly say that it was life-changing. After completing the program, I decided to stick with my Chinese language studies and pursued a PhD in Chinese politics.

—ETA in Taiwan

I was placed in Germany and have gone on to graduate school in Germany and am currently a fifth-year PhD student. The ETA experience was great for me and my German language skills, and I really benefited from this.

—ETA in Germany

The language, cultural and teaching experience I obtained have been very helpful in preparing me for my current work in a PhD program in linguistics. I tutor ESL students, study bilingualism and make regular use of my Chinese language skills.

—ETA in Taiwan

I learned a great deal about myself through the process and developed a love for learning about different cultures. As a direct result of my experiences abroad, I've been studying intergroup interactions for my PhD.

—ETA in South Korea



9.0 Encountering and Overcoming Challenges

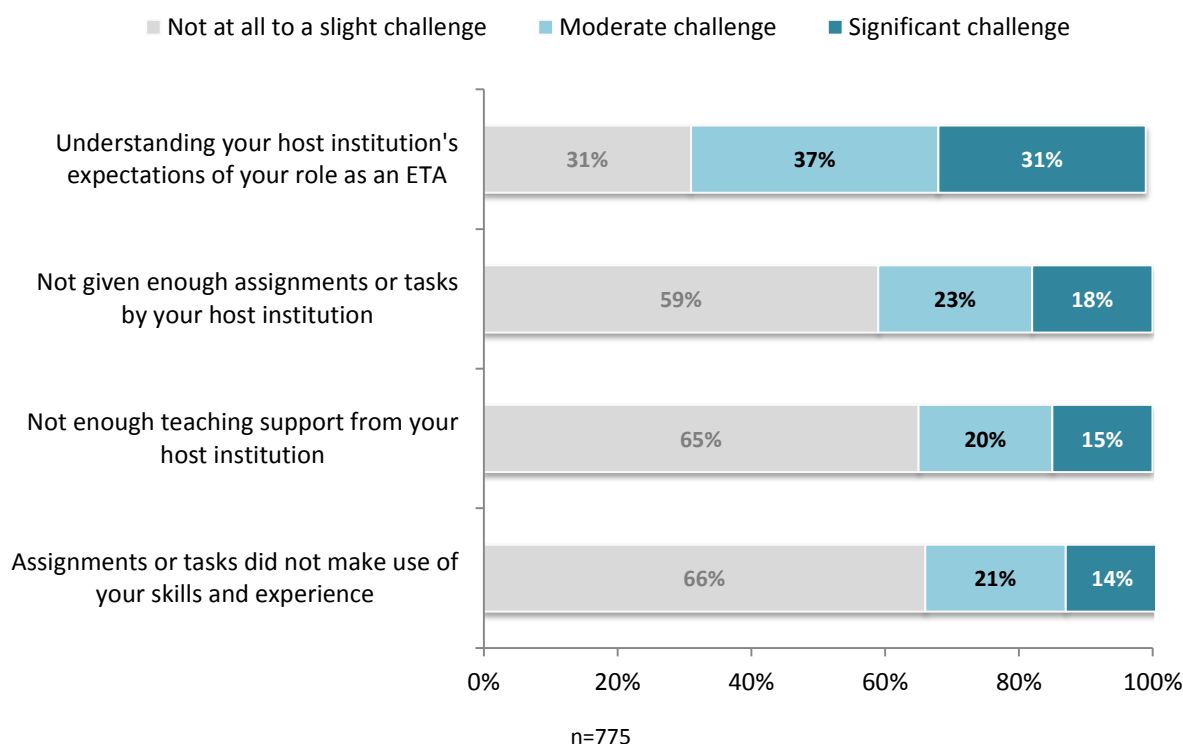
Fulbright ETAs encountered challenges during their year abroad, including both program-specific challenges and difficulties adjusting to the host country culture. Nonetheless, the support they received from various sources helped them overcome these challenges.

9.1 Encountering and Overcoming Programmatic Challenges

As shown in Figure 19, two-thirds (68 percent) of Fulbright ETAs surveyed found a moderate or significant challenge in understanding exactly what their respective host institutions expected of them. This uncertainty about how to employ ETAs sometimes led them to feel under-utilized. Indeed, more than one-third of ETAs considered insufficient assignments or tasks (41 percent) and/or assignments that did not make use of their skills and experience (35 percent) to be a moderate or significant challenge.

While two-thirds (65 percent) of ETAs were satisfied with the teaching support they received from their host institutions, 35 percent considered this a moderate or significant challenge.

Figure 19. Core Challenges Encountered during ETA Assignment



Some ETAs explained how these challenges had manifested at their particular institutions.

Most of my host institution teachers did not understand why I was there and did not know what to do with me.
—ETA in Germany

I was assigned a very limited role: to hold conversation groups for the students in the English class for journalists. ... I felt I could have done a lot more. I felt I could have taught the class that

the main professor lectured. I thought I could have added a lot more American insight than the lecturer did, as well as affect more students having that class taught by a native speaker of English.
—ETA in Belgium

In addition, some ETAs raised concerns about the limited classroom time they had with individual students, as their institutions rotated ETAs through many different classrooms to ensure that as many students as possible had access to their scarce time.

I had difficulty getting to know many of my students because I would see them only once a week. ... I was spread to different classes each day so that I could be with the most number of students. The result for me was difficulty keeping continuity.
—ETA in Germany

9.2 Sources of Support

While receiving sufficient support from host institutions was a challenge for some, most Fulbright ETAs (82 percent) indicated that they had received advice or guidance from mentors or senior teachers at their host institutions. More specifically, 6 in 10 ETAs (61 percent) reported that their mentors had helped them to develop lesson plans or teaching activities, as well as to choose appropriate teaching materials.

ETAs described how mentors had assisted them with their adjustment and helped them clarify their roles. For example, an ETA in Italy wrote, “My mentors helped me out tremendously in navigating a very different education system and making the most of the year, both for me personally and for the students we were teaching.”

In addition to their mentors, ETAs found support by sharing their thoughts and concerns with other teachers and with fellow ETAs posted in the same country. For some, peer support was also found through email correspondence with ETAs previously assigned to their host institutions.



Furthermore, prior to departing for their host countries, ETAs receive a short orientation, either in person or virtually, that includes instruction and insights into how to teach English most effectively and how to manage classrooms, and in some countries they receive additional “on-the-ground” training. While they found this training quite helpful, several ETAs suggested that even more training in pedagogical skills would have better prepared them to handle the work ahead.

The training program at the beginning was fantastic. However, more training on how to test student ability and make them feel like they are accountable for the work they do in class ... would have been nice.
—ETA in South Korea

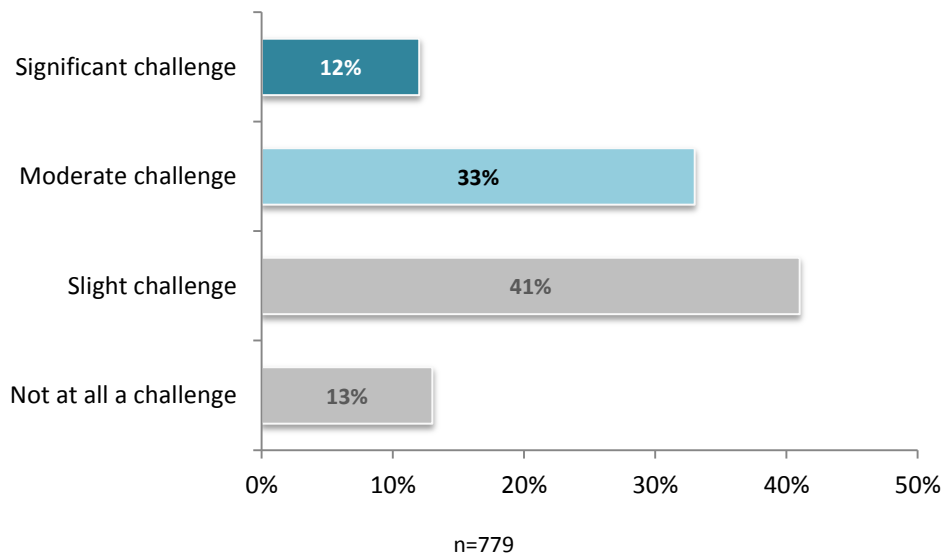
I think it would be great if there were more instruction in "how to teach" before ETAs are released into their schools.
—ETA in Germany

Even basic training in classroom management, lesson planning and assessment during the month-long orientation would have been enormously helpful.
—ETA in Russia

9.3 Adapting to New Cultural Environments

Fulbright ETAs experienced challenges adjusting to a different culture. For 45 percent of those surveyed, acclimation to their host countries presented a significant (12 percent) or moderate challenge (33 percent).

Figure 20. Extent to Which ETAs Found Cultural Adjustment Challenging



Mentors helped ETAs understand cultural norms in their towns or school, and provided social support throughout the program.

My mentor teacher was very supportive in helping me acclimate to the city. She helped me look for housing, sent me information about cultural events and regularly invited me to social activities.
—ETA in Argentina

The most valuable experience from my mentors was their ongoing support as I adjusted to the culture and language. They were always warm and supportive, making me feel like I had a familial support system.
—ETA in Spain

Relationships formed with other community members—including ETAs' students—also assisted ETAs with the adjustment process.

I was able to pull together a support network. ... I made some really good connections in the small town.

—ETA in Germany

I think the friendships I developed with students, teachers and people in the town made the experience a success for both sides.

—ETA in Argentina

10.0 Conclusions

Fulbright ETA placements abroad result in a profound cross-cultural exchange for both U.S. college graduates and their host country students, while at the same time greatly enhancing the students' English language skills.

The presence of an ETA at a host country educational institution offers several advantages for English learners. First, ETAs are native speakers of English who typically have limited proficiency in the students' native language; thus, students are forced to speak English in order to communicate. Second, ETAs are often close in age to their students, which makes the latter feel more comfortable speaking and asking questions. Additionally, ETAs typically emphasize conversational skills and interactive activities. As a result, after working with ETAs for a year, students substantially improve their English skills, while also gaining motivation to keep learning and greater confidence in their abilities. At the same time, ETAs' interactive teaching style helps students to become more active learners in general. Thus, all host country interviewees agreed that ETAs are a valuable educational resource for their institutions.

In addition to teaching English language skills, ETAs serve as “cultural ambassadors,” deepening their students' understanding of U.S. society and culture by sharing their personal experiences and perspectives and by providing opportunities for students to experience U.S. arts, such as theater, film and literature. In so doing, they often break down stereotypes about the United States by demonstrating the diversity of U.S. society. ETAs also use English as a vehicle to engage students in discussions of topics such as race, gender, politics and religion, thus increasing students' knowledge of democracy and civil liberties in the United States. Furthermore, by challenging people to rethink their perceptions of both the United States and their own country, most ETAs believed they had expanded the worldview of the people with whom they interacted.

Their year-long experience living and teaching abroad also makes a significant impact on ETAs' personal and professional lives. Immersion in another culture provides ETAs with not only host country expertise, but also a broader worldview and general intercultural skills that they continue to find useful in their personal and professional lives. Moreover, for many ETAs, their Fulbright experience was instrumental in helping them determine and pursue their career paths and/or paths of advanced study, often in fields related to education, language, international development or cultural studies. Finally, ETAs formed lasting bonds with friends and colleagues in their host communities, as well as a strong affinity for their host country. Many ETAs reported that—years after their teaching assignment—they still lived in or visited their host country, or otherwise maintained ongoing contact with the host culture through their studies, use of the language or other activities.